

Interview with R. Allen Irvine

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project
Foreign Service Spouse Series

R. ALLEN IRVINE

Interviewed by: Jewell Fenzi

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Q (FENZI): Joan Williamson and Jewell Fenzi are interviewing R. Allen Irvine at his home in Annapolis, Maryland, September 1, 1990. [Mrs. Irvine is also present.]

My first query, which I have asked all the male spouses, is: How do you perceive yourself in the Foreign Service as a spouse?

Q (WILLIAMSON): Let me expand on that a bit. I would think that you would expect to do the unpacking, set everything up, then what?

IRVINE: Well, I see myself as primarily support structure for Anne. That includes, as you say, the packing, unpacking, running the errands, finding out, hopefully, that a servant comes with the house; supervising the servant. I can see myself being a counter of the consumables, go down and keeping the keys. All the things that Anne did in Pakistan, I will do in Kaduna. I probably will work but I'm not sure in what capacity, and I don't want to start off that way. There may be a PIT job in the consulate general but I think I'll wait to see whether that is something we should do or not. I'm not sure that at a very small post there would be two of us working. My sense is that I will be the person at home, organize the place, move furniture when she tells me "move furniture," (hearty laugh) which I know we will.

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Q (WILLIAMSON): *How big a post is Kaduna?*

IRVINE: It's six Americans, including the communicator, secretary, admin., consular, economic-political combined, and the consul general. It's fairly small.

Q (WILLIAMSON): *Is there any possibility you could be teaching?*

IRVINE: There are two kindergarten through 8th grade schools, one a Catholic school and the other an international school, and I'm certified, so I could possibly do that. Since we'll arrive in December they'll probably be pretty well set, so I might do some substituting and see if I felt that's something I wanted to do. I've been teaching, now, 22 years, so I'd be perfectly happy not to teach (laughter) and particularly K through eight, my expertise being primarily in the high school. I will take along some materials and things on study skills, SATs, etc., and perhaps do some consulting for Nigerians who might be coming here for university, that kind of thing.

Q (WILLIAMSON): *It's been my experience that that information is always lacking.*

IRVINE: And then, I might look into the PIT, which comprises GSO-type functions, under the admin officer.

Q (FENZI): *I think the fact that you've had your own career makes a difference in your attitude about going out as a dependent spouse, compared to some of the younger ones whom I've talked to who see themselves as just almost tangentially connected with the embassy and they're there to be themselves, to pursue their careers. I wonder if your attitude isn't a little more realistic, given what we all know about —*

IRVINE: Yes. Even in the spouse briefing through OBC and FLO, there still is, I think, the feeling that somehow you're going out as a two-career and you're going to continue to pursue — there's not very many of them that really successfully do that, I don't think; it's real tough. So my sense is, I've had my career in Foreign Service, I'm still in the application

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process of going back in as an FSO; whether that will come or not I don't know. And tandem couples have a difficult time. But I've had my career, and I've had my 22 years of teaching, and to a certain extent I'm saying, "Hey, Anne, take over, take over, Kid!"

Q (FENZI): And she's willing, and an opportunity to do it —

IRVINE: We started looking into this going back overseas about four years ago. I looked into teaching and there are a lot of international schools overseas, but they do not pay very well, and they don't give you much in the way of shipment or the goodies; I mean, I would have made \$24,000 in Brussels and Anne could not have worked, and \$24,000 would have paid Wesleyan, that was it, and just one trip over, and then two years later a trip back. Then we both said, "What's the best way to get — " so we both took the exam. That's how it all happened, by 1988; that was the successful year. We both passed the written on the first go-round, then I passed the oral and she did not; then I didn't get placed on the Register. So then we took it again and both passed the written and the oral. And I said, "I'm not going through this autobiography and all that stuff. You go ahead and do it." Which she did and was accepted. Now I have decided I would finish my autobiography and bring my Security and Medical status up and see whether they would put me on the Register this time. So, we'll see. If they put me on the Register I'll probably just freeze it for 18 months, waiting until after Kaduna to see how we both feel.

Q (WILLIAMSON): Once you've both been in the field in a reverse situation. And you could also at that point see a little clearer what it would be like for a tandem couple in this day and age.

IRVINE: Exactly. Yes, it's tough. Of the three people in her class who are tandem, one is at the same post with spouse, the other two are in Dublin and London while their spouses are in Liberia and Bonn. The former flew back in with the helicopters. He spent three days in Freetown, then when the Marines went in he flew back in with them.

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Q (FENZI): It seems to me that you're going into this with the most reasonable, practical attitude, because you've had your career and you're willing to go into it more or less as we went into it as young officers, for the adventure and no intent on rapid promotion, ambassadorial goals. Am I right?

IRVINE: That's absolutely right. For both of us that's a real good thing, because part of the reason I got out was frustration with the Service and policy and idealism and what the heck, I'm 30 years older, and it's clear we're going in for fairly limited things, which is adventure, some travel, an interesting job, and in my case a chance to sit back a bit and let Anne take the forefront. So our whole viewpoint is much different. We're much less upset over policy than we were as 20-year-olds.

Q (WILLIAMSON): I think you're much more relaxed.

IRVINE: And much more relaxed, yes.

Q (WILLIAMSON): And more aware of what is possible.

IRVINE: True.

Q (FENZI): No expectations that are never going to be fulfilled. (all laughing) I think that the Foreign Service should look at more people like this. I mean, everyone can't be the best and the brightest because there just isn't that much room for them. Not that you're not the best and the brightest, but you're the best and the brightest without all the —

IRVINE: The expectations, yes. I'm interested in a number of second-career folks in her A-100. There must be four or five that are clearly in their 30s and 40s, maybe looking at it in terms with the lesser expectation of making the senior service and becoming ambassadors, career ministers or whatever, which is very good. And two have come in who were GSO or Personnel. specialists and are now officers.

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Q (WILLIAMSON): Yes, but I think the Service is trying to make it a little clearer that one can't expect that everyone is going to be ambassador —

IRVINE: Yes. When I went in, and I'm sure when you all joined, age 31 was the limit for junior officer. If you were over that, you either had to lateral in or you were not in. So my beginning class was very young. I saw a picture of my A-100 class back in 1960. (he laughs) Interestingly enough, Miss Anita McGillian is there in the picture, and she's there in 1990, as a secretary, the Foreign Service Institute secretary, who's very distinctive. She has a wide mouth, wears a bright red lipstick. I saw her in a hall and exclaimed, "McGillian, are you still here?" And she said, "Yes, I'm still there." And I said, "This is my wife; 30 years ago I was in this class." (laughter)

Q (FENZI): I wonder how you'll find that the Service changed in those 30 years.

IRVINE: It will be interesting to see.

Q (FENZI): One of the events we've had of course is the '72 Directive that liberated the spouses, which really wasn't any liberation at all in some ways.

IRVINE: Certainly I would expect considerably more women officers. In this class of Anne's, there are 14 out of 44 that are female. That's a big class. And I would expect somewhat less, shall we say, striving. I would think that some of these same things of maturity probably reflects in the corps as a whole, though I'm not sure yet, in terms of not feeling as if I think there's a little better understanding. When I went in in 1960, having taken the test in 1950s, State was still sort of dominant or there was a feeling that State was the dominant foreign policy actor. By now we've had the National Security Council, the Defense Intelligence Agency, et cetera, and it's clear that State is just one among a whole bunch.

Q (FENZI): Now we have Dan Rather. (laughter)

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IRVINE: Right! And communications, et cetera. So I think there's a little better sense of the limitations of State as a leader in foreign policy than there was in my day when we were the best and the brightest and we were the hotshots and we were going to make foreign policy and communications. We were still going on the mind set of the 40s and our upbringing. I think these kids are a little more tuned into the fact that with communications the way they are, and shuttle diplomacy, and Kissinger, all that has happened since. So the realization is that you're out there as a service rather than as a policy-maker. My sense is, then, they'll be a little more relaxed on that, maybe.

Q (FENZI): I hope you're right.

IRVINE: We'll see. Also, I think, just looking at post reports, the support structure for a hardship or isolated post seems to be very much better.

Q (WILLIAMSON): Absolutely, there's no doubt in my mind.

IRVINE: Transformers are available to each house, there's an emergency generator, you have a washer, a dryer, a freezer. I mean, when you walked out into the kitchen in Rawalpindi, there was a little charcoal stove, there was no way that a sahib could even manage in a kitchen out there; there was nothing except the local stuff. What they have now is amazing. In that sense, I think there's a big difference.

Q (FENZI): Now you're thinking like a spouse. (Irvine laughs)

Q (WILLIAMSON): That's straight, because those are the things that have made a difference, and certainly a lot of posts. Since I spent a lot of time in Africa, I can certainly see the difference between the first and fifth as to what was available all along the way. And that does make for a difference in morale at the post.

IRVINE: Right.

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Q (WILLIAMSON): And it's always difficult to function, let's face it, no doubt about it. It's hard enough to get people to go to Africa.

IRVINE: I'm sure that's true. Anne said that she's looking at beyond age 65, what could she do? Some people say, "Go GSO, go the admin route, and go out as a consultant, because often there are gaps in Africa; they just can't find the GSO or the consul to take those particular slots."

Q (WILLIAMSON): That's correct. There are some posts that have gone a year or two years —

IRVINE: With nobody bidding. The bid structure, is new, of course, since I was in.

Q (FENZI): Would you be able to fill, say, a GSO job if you wanted to? On the side?

IRVINE: I doubt it at this stage. I was administrative officer in Rawalpindi from 1962 to '64, and I'm amazed at what I did with very little training. I imagine I could do it again though I'm sure it's even more complicated. I mean, I got rid of government property, I leased houses, I ran the motor pool, all this stuff. I didn't have any administrative training before going out, only five weeks consular training, two days consultation in the embassy, and then I went up.

Q (WILLIAMSON): Yes, but on the other hand you didn't have fifty million forms to fill out.

IRVINE: That's true.

Q (WILLIAMSON): You had a couple of forms you had to fill out, and if you got those filled out and you covered your whatever —

IRVINE: That's true. So my sense is, it's much more complicated now, you're right. And what do they do? Eleveor twelve weeks of training for an Admin junior officer going out in the GSO slot, because of all of these regulations that are now in place. Things like

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petty cash, that used to be the bugaboo. I had a good friend who was up in Peshawar and his career really took a beating, somebody came in and did an audit and something was missing and there wasn't this receipt, et cetera. The poor guy was running six or seven locals. I think it's very good that they're running the training, otherwise you're thrown in, as I was, to the vagaries of a foreign landlord. Gosh. "Give me a break!" (laughing)

Q (WILLIAMSON): *Exactly.*

IRVINE: Negotiating a lease with a Pakistani was a really eye-opening experience.

Q (WILLIAMSON): *When I first started playing bridge with the Pakistanis, I was told to kind of guard my wallet.*

IRVINE: Count your points. We were in Pakistan for our first tour and Anne was the classified secretary. We decided to have our first child there and finally succeeded in getting pregnant. A young American woman married to a Pakistani, was very interested in the Lamaze method, either trained in it here or had done it by correspondence through a phonograph record. Four women formed a class, a British, a Pakistani, Anne and another American, all due in approximately the same six -week period. At that point, Lamaze was an unknown method even here. It's a prepared natural childbirth whereby you do a lot of breathing, and pant breathing, and then you're in control, you don't get knocked out. All four had their babies at a mission hospital, Holy Family Hospital, run by Catholic sisters.

Interestingly, the obstetric physician was Jewish, Harvard-trained. She had converted to Catholicism and about four years later, left the order, married a Pakistani, and was now Muslim. The three major religions! She was very good. The other doctor was also U.S.-university trained. So in a sense, it was going counter to the total American culture, which was to get your wife out to Frankfurt six weeks in advance. We just didn't want to do that. There were a fair number of military up in Peshawar, who would all fly out to Frankfurt and have their children. They were aghast at what we were doing. It was very good care. That was in 1964. Our daughter Kate was Pakistani. The fascinating cultural aspect here

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was that the birth certificate was in Urdu and she is stated as the daughter of Robert Allen Irvine, who is the son of John Elliot Irvine. Her name does not appear at all; she's just a vessel. That really brought home to us the importance of the male line in Muslim society.

What was fun also was that I was the one who then certified her birth. So she carries U.S. citizenship with my signature, one of my consular functions. I didn't do a lot of consular functions because we were in the Lahore district, but that one I did, and a few passports.

Q (FENZI): Yohad Thanksgiving dinner with Averell Harriman in 1962.

IRVINE: Yes. I had arrived about ten days early. It was a real strange function because Rawalpindi was the interim capital, the foreign ministry having moved up there from Karachi, but our embassy was still in Karachi. We had an embassy office in Murree, which was 40 miles up in the hills from Rawalpindi and were not permitted to move down there until they had sufficient housing, et cetera. It was a time of some tension and there may have been a reason for keeping us at arm's length or something. But there was an AID guest house in Rawalpindi, where there was one AID officer, who was, again, serviced from Lahore. That was where Harriman came and where we all came down from the Hills. He was out there trying, as everybody was trying, to solve the Kashmir problem. Later in our same tour George Ball arrived to solve the problem. I was security officer, motor pool officer, the whole shooting match, so I would have to do the sweep, or the RSO would come up and do it. But Harriman was an awesome guy, a real presence, it was like me sitting in the lap of a god, and very personable, very knowledgeable, not at all stuffy. I was very impressed with him.

Q (FENZI): A tremendous experience. Especially when you're new in the Service.

IRVINE: Absolutely. I had my first "demonstration" about two weeks after I arrived. We were driving down the hill and sudden up the hill come these kids from Murry Christian Colleg(he laughs), with their flags, waving banners. I think it was one of the early run-ins between Indians and Pakistanis, and the U.S. was holding back on spare parts, or, I can't

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remember, there was always something flaring up. But that was amazing, suddenly to be surrounded by these. My principal officer did a great job, got out, talked to them, listened to them, took their petition, shook hands, and we got back in the car and they waved goodbye to u(he laughs). That was early, they were nastier years later. It was a simpler time.

I remember walking over in Islamabad the patch of ground that was possibly going to be our new embassy and writing down a report to Karachi about location. It sounded all right, the Brits were next door, a pretty good idea, and there was a little ravine in the back and you could have some security built on the edge of it, at least control one access. Little did I know that years later it would be the Brits who would be able to get the Americans out of that embassy when it was burning. That was a time when the Paks just let the group through. Eventually some were taken off from the rooftop but others were inside in the "safe room." Somebody came over from the Brits through the back way, in that ravine, and got up, broke holes in the shaft and got them out. Otherwise they would have been suffocated. My guess is that this was sometime in the early 1980s. It was a sudden flare-up during Reagan's presidency. The only anti-American time in Kaduna, apparently, is the Libyan incident. They're Muslim, they're northern, and they identify with Qadhafi.

Q (FENZI): Getting back to the tandem-couple issue, what would happen if you were assigned to different posts? What would you do?

IRVINE: Hmmmm... We'd face that one when it came up. Probably one of us could take a leave of absence, although you can't do that as a junior officer. You have to be off probation in order to do that. So we might tough it out. The advantage would be that I would have a little longer. I'm three years younger than Anne. So we'd have three years' difference living overseas. But that's a tough one. (he laughs) I don't know how we'd handle that one. I really don't know.

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Q (WILLIAMSON): I'm sure that's a consideration as to whether you would go ahead and finish up and to be an FSO again.

IRVINE: Sure, precisely. I'll see what happens. Anne hopes that it doesn't come through. I say, for my own peace of mind, I'd like to be put on the Register even if it's at the bottom this time. You see, I was a former officer, and looking at myself, having taught high school for 20-plus years, I'm not bringing a Ph.D. in Sovietology or Chinese affairs or something, and I had left the Service. So I can see where they would feel "let's not put this guy on the Register." But we'll see what goes on the second round, and we should know that probably about the time we go out. I just re-did the medical, the security is finished.

Q (FENZI): And you should be able to play cricket in Kaduna.

IRVINE: Yes! I told Anne there were three criteria for assignment: a place where I could play cricke(2) where I could sinand (3) where I could have a job of some sort. Well, eight of the ten that Anne bid on were English-speaking, cricket-playing posts. (laughter) And Kaduna, actually, has two groups that do singing performances, and apparently some moderately active theater group. I think it depends on who's around. And employment opportunities are pretty good in Kaduna, given both the PIT job and the two schools and consulting, education, tutoring or whatever you want to call it.

Q (FENZI): I think your attitude's perfect.

IRVINE: Thank you.

Q (FENZI): With your career change, if you want to call it that. That's what it is, isn't it?

IRVINE: Well, we're ready to break. The kids are on their way out, we've given Annapolis a lot, and Anne was beginning to feel real frustrated. She was running for political office as her means of really getting something significant, in the Maryland House of Delegates. She ran in '82 and came close to winning. In '86 her mother had died and her dad was

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needing more of her time and energy, so she didn't run. She decided to run this year. So we had mounted a fairly major campaign and had our opening fund raiser. She'd raised \$7,000. One of the incumbents had decided not to run, so Anne looked like she might be pretty well set. Then the offer came through, and it didn't take us very long (they all laugh) - "bird in the hand". A summer that could be a little more relaxed than running around knocking on doors — God, this week would be chaos.

Q (FENZI): How do your offspring feel about ... ?

IRVINE: Good question. They're all feeling a little bit shaky about it. They love the idea, they think it's great. But our son, who was in Germany last semester says, "I'll be coming home, but there won't be a home." The nest is suddenly not there.

Q (FENZI): Are they young enough to have trips paid for?

IRVINE: George will be able to go as our dependent and have one educational round trip. So he'll see it. Our daughter is in environmental education and just now has seven Caribbean educators somewhere in Nova Scotia and New England.

Q (FENZI): So you will have the one son going down.

IRVINE: Yes. The other two, they may come and visit us, but my sense is that we'll either use our R&R to come back and see them in the U.S. or R&R to London and Dublin.

Q (FENZI): And meet at different places every year.

IRVINE: Anne's tour is two years, with one R&R.

Q (FENZI): Probably with an option to extend if you want to.

IRVINE: Two people have extended. Yes, Anne's got to look very closely at trying to get out again before. Apparently if you only have less than three years left, they don't send

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you out, they give you a Washington assignment she just learned yesterday. Now that we're assigned, we're reading like crazy and meeting people. One of the returning officers said, in May '90 in response to the query "What are the strengths and weaknesses at the post?" said, "Isolation from Lagos is a plus and a minus." Lagos ignores you, which is a plus, it's also a minus depending on your needs.

Q (WILLIAMSON): Whether it's supplies or advice that's being dispensed.

IRVINE: Exactly. In Pakistan, we lived on the economy a lot, and we'll probably try to do that to a certain extent in Kaduna.

Q (FENZI): I see from your topic sheet the varied things you've done. "Became in-country expert onew immigration laws in Sydney." How did you happen to do that?

IRVINE: I lucked into that. It was '66, the date when the new Immigration law came in, and I happened to be the junior or consular officer in charge of immigrant visas. There was a substantial waiting list in Sydney based upon the old national origins quota, so we had to alert everybody of that and make the shift over. I had to train the staff. Most of the IV immigrant visas came into Sydney, or if they were being done in the outer posts then it became clear that I knew what was going on, so they would ask me. If I didn't know, I would send a cogent telegram to the Department ... (end of tape)

She'd been so inured, so grounded, to the old system that I virtually had to retrain her, check everything, so some of the younger folks began to catch on quicker. She still stayed on, and came eventually to handle easily. (describing details of getting into working with staff member who had handled immigration before his arrival) The consular experience was very good for me, and I think it will be very good for Anne. She'll be the only consular officer there.

Q (FENZI): How many spouses will be there?

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IRVINE: Five, I think.

Q (WILLIAMSON): That's good. I'm sure you've heard that 50 percent of the Service now is single.

IRVINE: Is that right? Well, I made the assumption that there are five spouses out there, we may find otherwise. I think the only person who is not is my American secretary. Then there is a USIA person, a 7th officer. And an epidemics specialist of some sort, from USAID. Malaria is prevalent. *Q (WILLIAMSON): Measles, probably; one of the largest killers of children in Africa.*

Q (FENZI): It sounds as if there will be so few spouses that you truly wonder what happens when there's an American women's club activity, if there were any.

IRVINE: If there were. I've often wondered that myself. (he laughs) There are only four foreign missions there, the Germans, Egyptians, UK and US, I think; maybe one other. There's a French Peugeot assembly factory, and some oil refinery activity, some expatriate Brits, and several clubs, one that's predominantly French, the other mainly British. It's a good question. At a larger post there would be a wives club. Or we might just begin to call them "auxiliaries," (laughing) the way the American Legion does now.

Q (FENZI): Don't laugh, because I don't see why you shouldn't be Foreign Service Associates, or Foreign Service Auxiliaries. It's a very good point.

IRVINE: In the American Legion now, it's remarkable the number of women who have served. I'm not eligible for the American Legion, I learned the other day I didn't serve at the critical points when we were at war.

Q (FENZI): Would you advocate becoming an auxiliary or an associate instead of a spouse? Just as a designation.

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IRVINE: Yes. Suppose there's a "significant other" who is not married, and of course I don't know (he laughs) how they're going to handle that.

Q (WILLIAMSON): *They handle it rather badly now, I think.*

IRVINE: Do they acknowledge it? They should have a designation as an auxiliary, an associate as opposed to a spouse. We certainly used "spouse" a lot in the A-100 class. Everyone is very conditioned now to say "spouse" instead of wife. I can't say that's true of all of the ambassadors who have spoken to us, but they're of an age when it's hard to change all your habits.

Q (FENZI): *You of course were in the Service before the 1972 Directive.*

IRVINE: That's right.

Q (FENZI): *Which is not a Directive at all, it's a policy statement. And I've been doing research on it now, and it acknowledges male dependents, male spouses. It also obliquely acknowledges "other unconventional arrangements." And then it goes on and refers to everyone as "wives." (Irvine laughs) So, to my way of thinking, that invalidates it for today.*

IRVINE: What is the organization called?

Q (FENZI): *It's AAFSW, Association of American Foreign Service Women. IRVINE: Is that spouses who happen to be female and women officers?*

Q (FENZI): *No. Anyone can join who fits into the category of a woman officer or a spouse, I believe.*

Q (WILLIAMSON): *Mostly it's spouses. It's women and spouses. Because, quite honestly, the rest don't usually have the time.*

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Q (FENZI): And I think I can safely say, the organization now in Washington is mostly retired spouses. The others are all at work. But they have a very good president now to make the organization more of an advocacy, more relevant to today.

IRVINE: There are a lot of issues around spouses. It's come up a lot in our A-100 group.

Q (FENZI): Tell us about them, because that's part of what our project is all about. What kinds of issues have you dealt with?

IRVINE: There are probably a dozen male officers who are taking spouses over, and there's a lot of concern around the issue of "Can they work?" or "Should they work?" and "When should they have their children?" and so on. Early on there was enough concern about that that Alan and I hosted a potluck supper and had about 20 people out of the A-100 class. None of this concern is new to you but in terms of can they find jobs, and what are they to do with themselves.

Subsequent to that I began talking mostly to the men, whose spouses are wives, and it came out when we sat down with Bob, I can't remember his last name, who's helping with the course, that there was a lot of feeling that the spouses really hadn't been welcomed in. You get this letter before you come in saying, "Welcome. Your family is a part of a whole new family, da-da da-da," and they do say that spouses are welcome to come sit in on the classes. But it isn't in a very pro-active way; it's just kind of come if you want. And particularly for those for whom Washington is a whole new ball game and they're lost and they're sitting around in a hotel wondering what to do with themselves while their spouses are at work, we came to the conclusion that a cocktail party or a luncheon the very first week to which they would get a specific invitation might be nice. That way spouses can be aware of what resources are available. Unfortunately, they didn't make a big point of saying "we really hope that the spouses will make arrangements and will come. This is very much for them as much as for the officers." They'd gone halfway in setting it up, but you need, particularly with people who aren't in the center, who are in the

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periphery, to draw them in by hand, make them feel part of it. At least I think the staff is being very responsive. I also suggested, and they're trying to do this, a panel of spouses who are more junior. We've been talked to by ambassadors' wives, but that's like "off there someplace" in terms of role, stressing more the responsibility of the junior officer in receptions and representational things.

Q (FENZI): The junior officer but not the junior officer's spouse?

IRVINE: Precisely. Because they can't be required, as they were in my day.

Q (WILLIAMSON): How do they handle that in the course? Representation.

IRVINE: First, let me finish what I was going to say. They're trying to pull together a panel of spouses, some who workeoverseas, some who didn't work overseas, some who had their children overseas, to kind of interact a little bit. I'm really hoping they'll do that.

Other than telling the spouses they can sit in on the stuff that's designed for the officer, there is nothing in the course that addresses the issues of spouses directly. Except that in a lot of the role-play and a lot of the case studies they give us, they're very big on those now, which is good. (laughter) They use spousal relationships as an issue. We had one last week on conflict resolution: a spouse and his wife. He's coming home , she's bored and doesn't know how to get around, he's a workaholic at the office, the old story. So they're using that situation and yet they're not addressinit for the spouses! What good is it if they're bored and not knowing what to do?

So I'm very pleased. They were very responsive to our requests, and I think they'll incorporate some stuff for us and may make some changes subsequently. We'll see. You asked about how they handle representation. Well, they gave us a mock cocktail party, with an ambassador. First we were talked to by a panel of two Ambassadors' wives: Ray Atherton's wife, Betty; Ambassador Peck; and the other woman was Mrs. Walker. Her husband is ambassador to Madagascar. She's here on home leave; absolutely charming.

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They talked to us to the effect that you're on the job when you're at a function, what you should do, and so on, and answered some questions. My sense was that the younger generation doesn't know anything [about] formal entertaining. There was a lot of panic in the room. (she laughs) And they handled that very well — “What are you most worried about?” “What are your greatest concerns?”

Then they took us down the hall and we had a mock reception. Ambassador Peck set up a receiving line and had two in the class act as DCM and her husband, and be in the line. We all came through the line and half of us were to be guests, half officers. We were encouraged to use foreign languages, not know English, and whatever. It was kind of fun. The problem we found was that you didn't know who was guest and who was host! (laughter) Was I going up to one of my colleagues or to the Japanese ambassador? that kind of thing. Mrs. Walker had punch and wine and hors d'oeuvres and talked about “these are the things that I serve.” It was very nicely done. Then we went back and talked about it, how to go through the line, how to work the line, how to take people off the line, how to introduce, that kind of thing.

MRS. IRVINE: As far as the spouses were concerned, they didn't have to be.

IRVINE: No, the spouses can't be required.

MRS. IRVINE: And I think there was some discussion about whether you get a Mr. and Mrs. invitation you should play it the same way you play it in the U.S.

IRVINE: It was more specific. If you got a Mr. and Mrs. from the ambassador, the spouse goes. Don't fool around with that one. But the others you were not required. And I think they were thinking more like the Fourth of July things that ambassadors give, things that are for all-embassy or all-consulate staff, rather than involving foreigners.

Q (FENZI): Do you welcome this separation or does it make you feel a little bit left out? In our days, when we were in the Service, you were unofficially official. Now you are officially

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unofficial. There's a difference, because you are under no obligation whatever; you can go to your post and sit and read and not consider yourself a part of the embassy. I don't think that's realistic.

MRS. IRVINE: Well, it's no fun for us. He fully intends to go with me, and the first thing I'll tell the consul general is, "any invitation that comes to me, one should come to my husband." (laughter)

IRVINE: I think that's right.

Q (FENZI): Has it come up in your course "who sues whom?" I didn't think you could sue the Department, I thought you either had to sue James Baker or Lawrence Eagleburger. I don't think an individual can sue the U.S. Government, and this is the threat that has been held over spouses..

IRVINE: I thought that spouses already sued in '73. Or was it the women officers?

Q (FENZI): No, it was the women officers. That case was finally settled favorably for the women officers. It was a class action suit, a couple of months ago.

MRS. IRVINE: I know all about it, it delayed my candidacy by about six months. I thought "this is ironic. I'm going to be later getting in because of a women's class action suit." (she laughs)

Q (FENZI): But just because those women officers had a class action suit, the spouse is not an employee.

IRVINE: Where did the change in policy come that spouses couldn't be a line on the EER report, which it was in my day?

Q (FENZI): That came in '72 with the policy on spouses. The other day I just discovered I had as house guest, a CEO of a W. R. Grace subsidiary, who deals principally with women

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employees. Over breakfast we talked about his work and about this work, and I mentioned the Directive. The type of issues that he deals with daily, and has been dealing with daily. He's a very brilliant conceptualizer, and he asked to see the Directive. He took one look at it and said, "This thing doesn't hold water. First of all, a policy statement is current. A policy is not engraved in stone. A policy is created to shift with the times. Witness our recent change in foreign policy toward USSR, and Iraq for that matter. A policy should be well disseminated." I doubt if that policy has been circulated in the Department since it was issued in 1972. I never saw it in the Department. I saw the airgram.

Q (WILLIAMSON): I saw it in the field.

Q (FENZI): Well, because your husband brought it home to you. One woman I interviewed didn't know for five years that she'd been liberated, because her husband didn't bring her a copy. And also, the wording, as I said, is discriminatory. Our house guest said, "In essence, although the spouse is declared a private individual, the expectation is still there that she will continue working, is going to organize the Fourth of July party."

IRVINE: Take the kids out on Halloween, host the CODELs.

Q (FENZI): Well, of course the Department left all of those expectations there, created this "private individual" but made no provision whatsoever for doing the same things— (all voices finish the sentence together, content obscured)

Q (WILLIAMSON): That's why I asked the question about representation and how were they handling it.

Q (FENZI): Ergo, my CEO friend says, because this policy had all those flaws, "De facto there's no policy at all."

IRVINE: We did have a panel discussion at lunch called "Women in the Foreign Service." A number of us announced publicly that we hoped it wouldn't just be women who came,

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that this was an issue that we felt male officers ought to think about also. There were a few who came. The question came up at this meeting that there's a lot of concern on the part of single female officers about their role in representation and the expectation because they aren't going to have a spouse to do it. They got some good suggestions about co-hosting, particularly as a junior officer, to have a male officer or two female officers co-host. You're not doing the level of representational entertainment as a junior officer, you're mostly just being nice to host-country nationals that you meet and want to know a little better, and that can just as easily be done by Joe and Sally getting together and doing it at Joe's house or Sally's house.

I asked a question which they really didn't answer well: In whose name should the invitation be issued, then? Because if it were issued in the names of two junior officers, would that raise assumptions or questions? A woman officer said, "Well, I think by the time you've invited somebody to your home, in most countries they probably pretty well know that that's not an issue." I'm not sure I agree with that.

Q (WILLIAMSON): I'm not sure I do either, because the whole idea of some of your entertaining is to invite people you don't necessarily know well.

IRVINE: Or whom you've met briefly and you want to get to know better. I guess my answer would be to let the one whose house is the site be host or hostess, and then just grab the other person there to help greet, to help move around; and give credit and say "I'm really glad that Joe Schmoe was able to join me and help me in this entertainment tonight." I think one could do it that way.

Q (FENZI): The young people at our last post did it that way. Or you could have three people. Then they wonder which one is the m#nage # trois. (laughter)

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IRVINE: Then another suggestion that was made is to just pay people. A female officer who may have a servant, but the servant can't put on the whole thing and is going to be at work all day, can pay — I love this — another officer's wife, that there are some wives ...

Q (FENZI): Can representation cover that, or is there an allowance?

IRVINE: That didn't come up. Really, what they were saying ...

Q (FENZI): My question was, who's going to pay her?

MRS. IRVINE: Probably the junior officer ...

IRVINE: I guess we're assuming the junior officer probably isn't going to get representation money anyway; a lot of those don't, which leaves you more or less on your own hook.

Q (FENZI): It depends on your ambassador, at least it used to.

IRVINE: We got some in Pakistan ...

MRS. IRVINE: But you were Second Secretary by then, when we were back in Rawalpindi. I think there are a lot of unresolved questions, and I for one will be very interested to see how it plays out when we arrive at post. We're going to be such at such a small post that it's going to be highly individual-specific. But I think there are a lot of issues around women officers that aren't resolved. I will say this: the panels we've had, I have been very pleased at the candor with which most of those talking to us, male or female, about the situation.

Q (FENZI): Are much more open now than they were.

MRS. IRVINE: Here we are, the new raw recruits, and in most institutions that are as traditional as the State Department is, I would not have been at all surprised if they'd said "this is the way it is, boys and girls", and it's right. Wait until you get up a little further in the ranks before you can find out what it's really like. They've been very candid. Ambassador

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Dillery, who's spent a lot of time with us has been very open. We only had one time that we asked somebody about the class action suit and were told that that was past history, we don't talk about that, it's over and done with. It's not that past history, not at all, not when one of our female officers was asked archly by a mid-career officer, "Oh, did you come in before or after the class action suit?" And that came back and we had a little discussion about that. That's kind of implying, you know, "well, okay, if you came in after it obviously you're not as good." No, it's not past history at all.

Q (WILLIAMSON): No, it's absolutely not.

MRS. IRVINE: And I think there are some young women in our class who are concerned about that. They did come in as a result of the class action suit. One gal I've talked to a lot had been on the Register for 18 months and not been offered a position. When the Judge made them redo all the results, she went way up in the list when she was scored without the written. She was then offered a post almost immediately. So, she says, "I wouldn't be here except for that" She's very capable.

We have nearly a third class, this one. It's very hard. I think there are a number that are a result of that large group of women that were put on the Register after they were ...

Q (WILLIAMSON): Oh, I'm sure there are, because as I understand it the Judge's directive was that they must be accommodated first.

MRS. IRVINE: I thought they were rescored and then reranked.

Q (WILLIAMSON): Oh, I'm sure there was more to it than that but that those individuals had to be considered first. Whether they then were reranked, or whatever.

MRS. IRVINE: That's right, that's why I was delayed.

IRVINE: That's why we were delayed. It was funny, I didn't get in the class action suit because I passed the written and it was the written that they sued on. If you want my

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personal opinion, I think there's much more subjective possibility for sexism in the orals, actually, but they didn't sue on that.

Q (WILLIAMSON): *But it's my understanding that ... When did you take the written?*

MRS. IRVINE: I took it twice, in '87 and '88.

Q (WILLIAMSON): *You see, this was '81. It was the original that it's based on the discrimination in that the women had to get five points more than the men did. That's my understanding.*

MRS. IRVINE: I never even knew that. And that was thrown out in '81?

Q (WILLIAMSON): *That was what they were suing about, the original basis, the beginning of the suit.*

IRVINE: Well then, the pieces of the suit, which has had all sorts of ramifications that I think affected my situation was when he threw out the scores on the written exam, which he did for '86, '87 and '88. I don't know whether you know this, it's all brand new. They are redoing the test starting this fall. The head of B/EX came over and talked to us about it. I think there are some very good improvements.

For one thing, they're going to have a one-hour oral interview with the person. As he said, do you realize that except for the very “cool,” observing that goes on in that oral assessment, no one sits down and talks to you? Until you enter the Service, the day you're going to be — I mean, it's crazy. No one sits down and, as he was saying, talks to you about “does your wife/your husband really understand what this involves?” and “do you have a good understanding of the career?”

Q (WILLIAMSON): *Exactly.*

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MRS. IRVINE: And he said “no one has any opportunity to kind of weed out people who may have misconceptions” —

Q (WILLIAMSON): Or who may not really fit when they realize what's involved.

Q (FENZI): (to Mr. Irvine) How do you feel about that?

IRVINE: Oh, I don't have any problem in my situation, but I think some of these young folks that we met the other day, I really think they feel left out; they feel as if they're really boulevvers#, they're not quite sure. The spouses, not the officers. So for me, since I was in before, I don't feel left out, but I think some of these young spouses do and are not really quite sure what they're buying into.

IRVINE: Well, there's another piece of it, Al. When we got the bid list, you knew immediately to go to the Overseas Briefing Center and the lounge and get the post report and talk to people. We weren't given any kind of really thorough briefing that that's how you go research the post. And that while we're sitting in class, it's very appropriate for the spouses to go do it. That was another thing I suggested, that they give us a tour of the OBC. I think the spouses should be required to come to that, because that's their major resource, for kids, and themselves, and what it's going to be like, et cetera. It's very good, and yet other than this kind of generalized statement before you even arrive in Washington that says “spouses are welcome to come to any part that isn't classified,” you have to do more than that.

Q (WILLIAMSON): You have to tell them that OBC is there, and what is there.

IRVINE: And make them come, have them come, or to have them come.

MRS. IRVINE: I think a separate tour would be a good idea.

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IRVINE: How can you use it as a spouse? When can you use it? What can you check out, what can't you check out? If you have to have an identification thing, how do you go about? All that kind of stuff. Mike McCarthy is very good on this. His parents were Foreign Service, so he's able somewhat as we are to look at it. His wife has been in a lot of angst, she really is.

Q (WILLIAMSON): If there were just a sheet that went home to the spouses that lists what was available at the OBC.

Q (FENZI): I think you have to do more than that.

IRVINE: Yes, we got a big packet that said all that but I think —

MRS. IRVINE: It was addressed to me, you know? “You and your family.” Mike said they are “buying into a way of life.” I don't care whether they have to go to the ambassador's party or not, they are buying into a very different way of life, and they are part of the community. They should be welcomed as such when we arrive, and they are not.” This was Mike's statement when we were talking. He's one of my colleagues, a new officer, a Foreign Service offspring who's come in on his own. His wife is a professional, is working, and is very, very nervous about what she's going to do. She's going with him to the new assignment.

Q (FENZI): Well, if I may, I'll turn this tape over to OBC. Is that all right with you? (Mr. Irvine says it is.) Because I do lecture there, and I do lecture the A-100 spouses.

IRVINE: Is there still a spouse orientation?

Q (FENZI): Yes. I talked about the history of the spouse and I did have a group the other day of brand-new people.

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IRVINE: Well, that is available, then, and I don't want OBC to hear in my remarks that I don't think they're doing -

Q (FENZI): Well, that's why I was wondering if maybe the message just hadn't gotten across to you. But there again I don't think it's part of the A-100.

IRVINE: It might be Area, or it might be Administration —

MRS. IRVINE: There is a spouse's orientation. You got that when you went down to OBC and got their schedule of courses.

Q (FENZI): It used to be called "American Studies" but I don't know what it's called now.

IRVINE: I don't want to say that the spouses were sitting all by themselves feeling sorry for themselves. A number of them had taken a couple of the OBC courses, one of them had taken "Teaching English as a Foreign Language" and feels that that was very good. So, yes; but there could be more.

Q (FENZI): But there could be more.

IRVINE: It's simply being a little more pro-active, and this isn't coming from OBC, it's coming from the A-100 course. I really like Mike's idea of, say, Wednesday of the first week, close at five o'clock, have a reception not only for us but for the spouses, and invite them and their kids to come and be welcomed, and meet the other people in the classes so that they can feel they're part of the community.

MRS. IRVINE: It seems to me that this is all part and parcel of this whole thing of the Directive: that if we start talking about having you "come and be part of the reception," then are they in essence violating the weather of the policy statement?

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IRVINE: You're absolutely right, because when we talked about that with Bob, the staff person, he said they're worried about that. So they're on this balancing kind of thing.

Q (FENZI): Because there's been no more divisive issue among spouses in the Service than the Directive. I mean, you weren't lukewarm, you were either for or against.

IRVINE: There have been some very, very strong feelings about it.

MRS. IRVINE: Those that were for the Directive feel that it should not be tampered with in any way, shape or form. They like the idea that they do not have any thing to do or need to have anything to do with anything other than just physically being on the post and do their own thing.

IRVINE: Well, there are people in the world who are very self-assured and know who they are. And for those people that's fine. And there are people in the world who get into things that they don't know what they're getting into and can use a helping hand. And if there's a way of giving a helping hand if it's needed, without getting the back up of those who are so self-assured — and I think the older we all get, the more we realize w(laughing) aren't so self-assured as we think we are.

MRS. IRVINE: Well, I think that the only way it could be done, then, would be one of those situations where it was said that well, if you're going to do a mock reception, so that you as officers can all go through it, we will make it at a time of day so that any spouses who would want to [can].

Q (WILLIAMSON): Who want to come, could come. But they're going to have to do it on that kind of a level or they're going to be in serious trouble. Because somebody is going to stand up and scream.

IRVINE: When I say have a reception or a kind of welcome thing that first week, I don't mean the mock reception. I mean a real one.

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Q (WILLIAMSON): *I think that's a good [idea].*

IRVINE: Interestingly enough, they made a big point of getting us organized the first week and electing a social chair, and people went down to amusement parks, people organized things and we did a follies, that kind of stuff. And the spouses are very welcome and all that. But that's generated by ourselves, and it was out of that that Alan and I had the potluck supper and had people talk about spousal issues. As a matter of fact I've committed Alan to do it again now that everybody has their posts.

MRS. IRVINE: I think that's a good idea. [Whether its] authorized by the A-100 people, or whether it's ...

Q (FENZI): *I think there's a very broad line there as to who's doing it.*

IRVINE: I think it could be done without people feeling that [they must come.] There are some spouses that haven't come to anything and are perfectly happy.

Q (FENZI): *Yes, but you see the system as it is now is geared for those women. It would be interesting to know how many there are in each camp. Have you ever seen the 1985 "Role of the Spouse in the Service?"*

MRS. IRVINE: That's interesting, because the most unhappy women, of course, are like a spouse. A report was done by AAFSW in 1985 on the role of the spouse in the Service, and the higher up you get, the more unhappy you are. The happiest women are the ones who had some representational work to do, had time for their families, and also were able to pursue their interests or their skill, not total career focus but just keep their oar in. You see, the '72 Directive treated women as if we were a monolithic group, as if we all had the same responsibility. That's not true at all, as you just pointed out. The young officers, they suggest that they get together and give an informal party, look at the expectation that the consul general will have on his spouse if she is there at post. She is going to have to entertain the visiting Americans, she'll have to do the Fourth of July. He is going to do it,

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and she is going to sit there with this great huge guilt trip because (Mr. Irvine laughing) this is unrealistic.

Q (WILLIAMSON): *Because she can't eat up the whole allowance for the year.*

Q (FENZI): *The whole thing is just dumb.*

IRVINE: What is your answer?

Q (FENZI): *My answer is, and I've spent five years interviewing women, researching women and men, thinking about it, looking back on our own experience, my answer is to designate the spouse when he or she comes in as a Foreign Service auxiliary or associate, give them a job description. The job description can be written at the Overseas Briefing Center by the people who are there taking part in the courses, and they can define how they see their duty. There'll be an overlay administrative job description for the women who are indeed running, who are managing. Joan has run a residence, I ran a small consular residence with five servants at the house and nine ... (end of tape)*

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Spouse: Ann Lang Irvine

Spouse Entered Service: July 23, 1990
Left Service: Active Duty
You Entered Service: April 20, 1960
Left Service: August 28, 1968

Status: Was FSO from 1960-1968; became spouse with Ann Lang's appointment July 23, 1990

Posts: Self: 1960-1961 FSI orientation, French language, consular training
1961-1962 Administrative officer, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington,

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DC 1962-1964Administrative officer, third secretary, Murree/Rawalpindi, Pakistan
(Ann as classified secretary, FS1-12, November 1962-January 1964 1964-1966Vice
Consul, Sydney, Australia 1966-1967FSI Hindi-Urdu Language (Ann part time student)
1967-1968Political officer, 2nd secretary, Rawalpindi/Islamabad, Pakistan

Spouse's Position: 1961-1962GS-12 U.S. Department of Agriculture Foreign Training
Division 1962-1964FSS-12 Secretary Murree/Rawalpindi, Pakistan

Date and place of birth: December 29, 1934, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania

Parents:

John Elliott Irvine - Gardener, private estate manager

Mary Ann Allen Irvine - Homemaker

Schools:

Lower Merwin High, Ardmore, Pennsylvania

Haverford College, Haverford, Pennsylvania - BA 1956

University of Hawaii, 1958-1960 toward MA

Date and Place of Marriage: October 28, 1961, Washington, DC

Profession: Teacher/Educator

Children:

Katherine (1964, Rawalpindi, Pakistan)

John (1966, Sydney, Australia)

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George (1969, Baltimore MD)

Volunteer positions held: A. At Post: Played cricket in Rawalpindi and Sydney Performed in "Pindi Players" amateur theater

B. In Washington, DC: Coached boys' club basketball

Honors: Member, Founders Club, Haverford College

End of interview